

Remarks of U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara to ADL

October 29, 2009

It is my absolute honor and privilege to accept the Leon and Marilyn Klinghoffer Memorial Foundation Award on behalf of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.

We in law enforcement strive, every day, to bring a measure of justice to innocent victims who suffer from the senseless violence and terrorism that results from hatred and intolerance.

Central to our work is the vindication of the victims of crime. It is what motivates us to do everything we can in the pursuit of justice. That is why we are so inspired by people like the Klinghoffers, as well as all of you at the ADL, who work equally hard to combat the forces of intolerance and hatred.

So, as much as you thank and honor us with this award, we thank and honor you in return – especially Lisa and Ilsa Klinghoffer for presenting it to our Office, in memory of their parents.

Of course, this award was earned – not by me. I've been the U.S. Attorney for only 11 weeks. Rather, it was earned through the incredible labor and dedication of prosecutors in my Office, working hand-in-glove with the absolute finest agents from the DEA.

I would like to thank our friends and partners from the DEA's Special Operations Division who worked tirelessly on the investigation and prosecution of Monzer al Kassar, including case agents John Archer and William Brown and Group Supervisors Brian Dodd and Lou Milione. And as always, Assistant Special Agent in Charge Jim Soiles and Special Agent in Charge Derek Maltz.

Standing behind me are the two prosecutors on the case – Boyd Johnson and Brendan McGuire. They worked night and day, over a period of years, to bring to justice one of the world's most dangerous arms dealers. Without their unwavering leadership, perseverance, and commitment, a man of renowned violence and intolerance – who literally traded in death and destruction – might still be free today.

Instead, they brought to justice, in an American courtroom, a man who – for decades – appeared to be above the law. He now makes his home in a small cell in a federal prison, where he will likely remain for the rest of his life.

I know I speak for Boyd and Brendan when I say that it was a unique and special honor to represent the interests of Lisa and Ilsa in this case, who made the trip to court every day of Kassar's trial and throughout his sentencing proceeding.

Let me end by recalling the words of a former Attorney General. More fitting to the occasion today than anything I might muster are the words of Bobby Kennedy – who once led the Justice Department that includes my Office; who felt firsthand the suffering of a murdered loved one;

who (like the Klinghoffer daughters) tried to convert a portion of that pain into a public commitment to justice; and who, not long before he himself was assassinated by a man full of hate, spoke these words, which well capture the spirit of the Anti-Defamation League's unyielding mission to end intolerance and hatred:

“We must recognize that this short life can neither be ennobled nor enriched by hatred or revenge . . .

“Our lives on this planet are too short and the work to be done too great to let this spirit flourish any longer in our land . . .

“[W]e can perhaps remember - even if only for a time - that those who live with us are our brothers, that they share with us the same short movement of life, that they seek - as we do - nothing but the chance to live out their lives in purpose and happiness, winning what satisfaction and fulfillment they can.

. . .

“Surely we can learn, at least, to look at those around us as fellow men and surely we can begin to work a little harder to bind up the wounds among us and to become in our hearts brothers and countrymen once again.”

What those words and this award and this occasion should teach us is that all of us – whether as prosecutors in the courtroom or agents in the field or community leaders in the public square – need to work together, each doing our own part, in the unending fight for justice.

Thank you again.